

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 IO-13 HA-05 /104 W
-----060573 201223Z /43

R 201136Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2948
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH
AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT, ET
SUBJECT; ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS TROUBLE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

SUMMARY: THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) VIEWS NEGATIVELY
THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT OFFENSIVE AGAINST
ERITREAN INSURGENTS. ITS REACTION THUS FAR ON THE ISSUE
DEMONSTRATE THE CAUTION IT EXERCISES WHEN SOVIET INTERESTS
ARE CONCERNED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE ERITREAN REBELS
IS BEING VIEWED NEGATIVELY BY THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY
(PCI) WHICH HAS LONG PROVIDED MATERIAL AND MORAL
ASSISTANCE TO ERITREAN INSURGENT GROUPS. WHILE SENIOR
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PARTY LEADERS HAVE NOT YET PRONOUNCED THEMSELVES ON THE
ISSUE, ARTICLES MAY 17 AND 18 IN THE PCI DAILY L'UNITA
INDICATE PRESENT PARTY THINKING ON THE ISSUE.

2. THE FIRST PUBLIC INDICATION ON THE DEPTH OF PCI
FEELING ON THE ERITREAN ISSUE SURFACED IN THE MAY 17 ISSUE
OF L'UNITA IN THE FORM OF A FRONT PAGE BOX HIGH-

LIGHTING AN ARTICLE APPEARING IN THE FOREIGN SECTION. UNDER THE TITLE QUOTE ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE IN ERITREA END QUOTE, THE CONTENTS OF THE BOX REPORT THAT QUOTE A DISTRUBING, MASSIVE, AND VIOLENT MILITARY OFFENSIVE HAS BEEN UNLEASHED BY ADDIS ABABA AGAINST THE AREA OF ERITREA LIBERATED BY THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS. IN THE ATTACK, LARGE NUMBERS OF LAND AND AIR FORCES ARE PARTICIPATING. SUGGESTIONS AND DENIALS OF THE PRESENCE OF SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY FORCES. END QUOTE. THE FULL STORY AMPLIFIES ON THE ABOVE SUMMARY AND QUOTES MENGISTU AS SAYING THAT QUOTE AMONG OUR FRIENDS, WE HAVE THE SOVIET UNION, CUBA, SOUTH YEMEN, EAST GERMANY AND OTHER COUNTRIES SINCERELY SOCIALIST AND PROGRESSIVE. THE TRUE, PROGRESSIVE, ABOVE-MENTIONED FRIENDS LIVE WITH US, DIE WITH US, AND FIGHT WITH US AFTER HAVING TRAVELED THOUSANDS OF KILOMETERS, END QUOTE. AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE IS A QUOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN'S PRESSNZNCONFERENCE OF MAY 16 IN WHICH THE SOVIET AND CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA WAS TERMED QUOTE HIGHLY DESTABILIZING, END QUOTE.

2. L'UNITA MAY 18 HAS A LEAD COMMENTARY ON ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS AUTHORED BY ROMANO LEDDA, SECRETARY OF THE PCI'S NEWLY ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE. NOTING THAT ERITREA IS NOT THE OGADEN AND THAT THE QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE ERITREAN INSURGENTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CANNOT BE CONFUSED WITH THE MILITARY INTERVENTION OF SOMALIA, LEDDA TERMS THE ACTIONS OF THE INSURGENTS AS PART OF A JUST STRUGGLE THAT IS IN CONFORMITY WITH THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES THAT REGULATE THE POLITICAL ORDER OF THIS PHASE OF THE NATIONAL LIFE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT. LEDDA ADDS THAT QUOTE WHETHER THERE IS AT ADDIS ABABA HAILE SELASSIE OR A GOVERNMENT OF YOUNG OFFICERS OF A PROGRESSIVE INSPIRATION, IT IN NO WAY CHANGES THE LEGITIMACY OF THE ERITREAN CAUSE. IT IS THE NEW ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT THAT IN THIS QUESTION OUGHT TO DEMONSTRATE A DESIRE TO BE TRULY NEW. END QUOTE.

3. COMMENT: THE FORMULATION OF A POLICY ON THE HORN OF AFRICA HAS NOT BEEN EASY FOR THE PCI BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSITY OF ITS INTERESTS IN THE AREA. IT LONG MAINTAINED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH SOMALIA WHERE THE PCI ALSO HAS ECONOMIC INTERESTS. THE PARTY FOR IDEOLOGICAL REASONS FELT OBLIGED TO RECOGNIZE THE REVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE MENGISTU REGIME AND TO DEFEND IT WHEN THE

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R 201336Z MAY 78
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SOMALIS PROVIDED DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO THE INSURGENTS
IN THE OGADEN, JUSTIFYING AT THE SAME TIME THE RIGHT
OF THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS TO GO TO THE AID OF THE
MENGISTU REGIME. FINALLY, THE PCI HAS LONG GIVEN
MATERIAL AND MORAL SUPPORT TO ERITREAN INSURGENTS. ALL
THIS HAS LED TO BEHIND THE SCENES DEBATE AND, WE
ARE TOLD, EVEN TO TENSIONS BETWEEN SENIOR PCI
OFFICIALS, ON THE POLICY CHOICES WHICH HAVE BEEN
MADE. A FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR, FOR THE PCI,
IS THE CHARGES CIRCULATING, TO WHICH THE PARTY
IS EXTREMELY SENSITIVE, THAT IS POLICY CHOICES
REGARDING THE HORN OF AFRICA HAVE BEEN TO DATE
CONDITIONED BY THE SOVIETS.

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4. THE CURRENT DEVELOPMENT DOES DEMONSTRATE THAT THE

PCI IS PREPARED ON OCCASION TO TAKE A POSITION DIVERSE FROM THAT OF THE SOVIETS IN AN AREA WHERE ITS INTERESTS ARE AFFECTED, ALTHOUGHT IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT THE PCI HAS THUS FAR REFRAINED FROM USING ONE OF ITS SENIOR OFFICIALS, I.E., PAJETTA, WHO IS ITS CHIEF FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN, TO SET FORTH ITS POSITION. FURTHERMORE, IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE PCI, IN PUTTING DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND THE SOVIETS ON THE ERITREAN ISSUE, HAS THUS FAR TAKEN CARE NOT TO TOUCH SOVIET SENSITIVITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, LEDDA'S LENGTHY COMMENTARY IS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE ACTIONS OF THE ETHIOPIAN REGIME, BUT IT DID NOT ONCE MENTION SOVIET AND CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN BUILDING UP THE MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE ETHIOPIANS NOR SOVIET JUSTIFICATION FOR AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE CURRENT OFFENSIVE. IN SUM, WE FIND YET ONE MORE OCCASION ON WHICH THE PCI IS READY TO GO THE FIRST FEW YARDS IN DISTANCING ITSELF FROM THE SOVIETS BUTNMS NOT ABLE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS TO COMPLETE THE JOURNEY. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY LINE, COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT, COMMUNISTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978ROME09353
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780213-0015
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780538/aaaabfnx.tel
Line Count: 190
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 986d179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2629045
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ; ERITREAN DEVELOPMENTS TROUBLE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY SUMMARY: THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) VIEWS NEGATIVELY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT OFFENSIVE AGAIN
TAGS: PINT, IT, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/986d179a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014